

## Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION ARA-06

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00

SP-02 PRS-01 IO-03 ACDA-10 EUR-08 L-01 PM-04 DODE-00

EB-03 MC-01 SSO-00 INRE-00 /064 W

----- 047215

O R 200200Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8250

INFO AMEMBASSY MEXICO

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMCONGEN BELIZE

USUN NEW YORK 347

USCINCSO

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 GUATEMALA 5152

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR GT BH UK US

SUBJECT: BELIZE DISPUTE - MEETING WITH PRESIDENT LAUGERUD

REF: STATE 220343

1. SUMMARY: PURSUANT TO MY INSTRUCTIONS (REFTEL), I MET WITH PRESIDENT LAUGERUD AT 11 AM ON SEPT. 19 FOR AN EXTREMELY FRANK DISCUSSION OF THE BELIZE PROBLEM. DURING OUR CONVERSATION, I LAID IT ON THE LINE WITH THE PRESIDENT SO THAT THERE COULD BE NO POSSIBLE MISUNDERSTANDING OF US OPPOSITION TO THE USE OF FORCE BY GUATEMALA IN BELIZE. I

MADE IT EXPLICITLY CLEAR THAT SHOULD THERE BE A RECOURSE TO MILITARY ACTION BY GUATEMALA, THE US COULD NOT TAKE A SUBSEQUENT POSITION IN INTERNATIONAL FORA, THE OAS OR THE UN, WHICH COULD BE INTERPRETED AS ACCEPTING, APPROVING, OR REWARDING THE USE OF FORCE. I HAD MORE THAN HALF EXPECTED THAT THE PRESIDENT, SENSITIVE AND HIGHLY SECRET

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NATIONALISTIC AS HE IS, WOULD REACT ANGRILY. I WAS

WRONG. ALTHOUGH HE CAUGHT HIS BREATH OR LOOKED STARTLED SEVERAL TIMES DURING OUR TALK THE MOOD CONTINUED TO BE THAT OF A BLUNTLY FRANK CONVERSATION BETWEEN FRIENDS. THE PRESIDENT ASSURED ME AND ASKED ME TO ASSURE MY GOVERNMENT THAT HIS FERVENT DESIRE WAS TO AVOID A SITUATION DEVELOPING WHICH MIGHT LEAD TO AN ARMED CLASH. HE WAS AWARE OF THE DANGER, AS IN THE SALVADOR-HONDURAS WAR, THAT MILITARY MOVES AND PUBLIC EXCITEMENT COULD GET OUT OF HAND AND LEAD IRREVERSIBLY TO AN ARMED CONFLICT. HIS URGENT DESIRE WAS TO RENEW CONVERSATIONS WITH THE BRITISH TO SEEK A PEACEFUL SOLUTION. IN THIS CONNECTION HE APPEALED FOR ACTION BY THE USG TO ASSIST THESE TALKS EITHER BY FORMAL MEDIATION OR BY PROPOSING POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO BOTH SIDES FOR CONSIDERATION. I EXPLAINED INFORMALLY TO THE PRESIDENT HE COULD NOT EXPECT A FAVORABLE REPLY TO FOF REQUEST FOR C-47 AIRCRAFT AS LONG AS DOUBT PERSISTS OVER THEIR POSSIBLE IN BELIZE. END SUMMARY.

2. I BEGAN CONVERSATION BY TELLING PRESIDENT THAT DURING MY RECENT LEAVE IN US FOR PERSONAL REASONS, I WAS CALLED IN BY DEPARTMENT AND AS RESULT HAD RETURNED TO GUATEMALA SOMEWHAT EARLIER THAN ANTICIPATED, ON INSTRUCTIONS OF MY GOVERNMENT TO SEE HIM. DEPARTMENT WAS CONCERNED OVER VARIOUS INDICATIONS THAT GUATEMALA MAY BE CONTEMPLATING MILITARY ACTION IN BELIZE. IN THE SPIRIT OF FRANKNESS WHICH HAS ALWAYS CHARACTERIZED OUR CONVERSATIONS I HAD COME TO ASK HIM WHAT GUATEMALA HAS INTENTIONS WERE. PRESIDENT REPLIED THAT AS MILITARY MAN HE UNDERSTOOD HUMAN AND MATERIAL COST OF WAR. GUATEMALA HAS TOO MANY PROBLEMS OF ITS OWN AND CANNOT AFFORD TO WASTE ITS RESOURCES ON A MILITARY ADVENTURE IN BELIZE. FURTHERMORE, GUATEMALA COULD NOT AFFORD TO ASSUME RESPONSIBILITY FOR BELIZE; IT DID NOT HAVE FINANCIAL RESOURCES UK SPENDING TO SUPPORT THE TERRITORY. IT WOULD BE FOOLISH TO ATTACK THE BRITISH, WHO ARE STILL A GREAT POWER, CAPABLE OF MOVING TROOPS INTO THE AREA IN SHORT ORDER. CUBA MIGHT ALSO RESPOND TO A CALL FOR HELP FROM BELIZE AND SEND IN "VOLUNTEERS." HE WAS THEREFORE DETERMINED TO AVOID ANY MILITARY CONFLICT OVER BELIZE -- UNLESS GUATEMALA IN HUMILIATED.

3. PRESIDENT THEN READ ME PROVISIONS OF CONSTITUTION REQUIRING GOVERNMENT TO SETTLE GUATEMALA'S TITLE TO BELIZE AN REQUIRING ARMED FORCES TO PROTECT NATIONAL TERRITORY. HE SAID NO GUATE-  
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MALAN GOVERNMENT COULD STAND AGAINST FURY OF POPULACE AS WELL AS ARMY IF THEY WERE TO FEEL THAT GOVERNMENT HAD BETRAYED THEM ON BELIZE ISSUE. I SAID AMERICANS HAVE GREAT RESPECT FOR OUR OWN CONSTITUTION AND THE CONSITUIONS OF OTHERS, BUT WE DONT'T SEE OURS AS UNCHANGING OR STATIC. WE HAVE MODIFIED OUR OWN AND THEN MODIFIED THE MODIFICATIONS. THEREFORE I WAS NOT VERY IMPRESSED BY ARGUMENT THAT CONSTITUTIONS REQUIRES GOG TO ACT. PRESENT CONSTITUTION DATES ONLY FROM 1965;

ISSUE WAS NOT MENTIONED IN EARLIER CONSTITUTION AND MAY NOT BE  
MENTIONED IN NEXT ONE. PRESIDENT INTERJECTED THAT IF DISPUTE  
SETTLED HE WAS PREPARED CALL CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION TO AMEND  
DOCUMENT. I SAID IT SEEMED TO ME PROBLEM COULD ALSO BE  
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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SS-14 NSC-05 NSCE-00 INR-05 CIAE-00

SP-02 PRS-01 IO-03 ACDA-10 EUR-08 L-01 PM-04 DODE-00

EB-03 MC-01 SSO-00 INRE-00 /068 W

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O 200200Z SEP 75

FM AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA

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SETTLED WITHIN TERMS OF PRESENT CONSTITUTION WITHOUT AMENDMENT.  
PRESIDENT AGREED, SAYING THERE WERE ALL KINDS OF FORMULAE THAT  
COULD RESOLVE PROBLEM, MENTIONING RESORT TO ICJ IN PASSING AS  
ONE OF THEM BUT HE REPEATED THAT GUATEMALA COULD NOT BE HUMILIATED.

4. PRESIDENT SAID HE WAS ANXIOUS TO AVOID EL SALVADOR-  
HONDURAS SITUATION WHERE PUBLIC OPINION HAD GOTTEN OUT OF  
CONTROL AND FORCED GOVERNMENTS' HANDS. FOR THAT REASON  
GOG HAD CAREFULLY KEPT ITS PUBLIC STATEMENTS MODERATE AND  
LOW KEY AND HE HAD INSTRUCTED HIS FOREIGN MINISTER TO FOLLOW  
SAME COURSE IN UNGA. HOWEVER, JAMAICA AND TRINIDAD ARE  
SCHEDULED SPEAK BEFORE GUATEMALA AND FOREIGN MINISTER WOULD  
HAVE TO ANSWER ANYTHING THEY MIGHT SAY POINT BY POINT. I SAID  
THAT I WAS GLAD TO HEAR THAT HE WAS TAKING STEPS TO MAKE SURE  
THAT GUATEMALAN PUBLIC OPINION DID NOT BECOME AGITATED. I  
SAID THAT THE UNITED STATES ALSO HOPED THAN AN EXTREME

RESOLUTION, A RESOLUTION GUATEMALA WOULD CONSIDER HUMILIATING, WOULD NOT COME OUT OF UNGA. I WAS INSTRUCTED TO ASSURE THE PRESIDENT THAT WE WOULD WORK TOWARD THAT END. WE WILL WORK WITH THE BRITISH AND WE WILL URGE THAT BELIZE RESOLUTION NOT

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BE IN ANY WAY EXTREME OR HUMILIATING. PRESIDENT SAID HE WAS VERY GRATEFUL FOR THIS ASSURANCE.

5. IN MY PERSONAL VIEW, I THOUGHT THAT BRITISH MIGHT FEEL THEY COULD GO ALONG WITH A RESOLUTION RECOGNIZING THE RIGHT OF BELIZE TO INDEPENDENCE AFTER THE PEACEFUL SOLUTION OF THE DISPUTE WITH GUATEMALA. PRESIDENT SAID HE THOUGHT THAT WAS EXACTLY THE RIGHT KIND OF RESOLUTION. IF IT CALLED FOR IMMEDIATE INDEPENDENCE ALONE, WITH NO REFERENCE TO THE NEED TO CONTINUE TALKS WITH GUATEMALA, THAT WOULD BE AN UNACCEPTABLE HUMILIATION FOR GUATEMALA. WHAT GOG WANTS IS THAT NEGOTIATIONS BE RESUMED AND CONTINUED. THEY CAN GO ON FOR A LONG TIME AS LONG AS THERE IS SOME HOPE OF A SOLUTION. THE DISCUSSIONS HAVE TO BE TWO WAY; UK CANNOT EXPECT SIMPLY TO SIT FOREVER AND LISTEN. HE HAD SPOKEN WITH ME BEFORE ABOUT THE ROLE US COULD PLAY IN ADVANCING CAUSE OF PEACEFUL SETTLEMENT. IT WOULD BE WONDERFUL IF SECRETARY KISSINGER COULD STEP IN AND MEDIATE THE DISPUTE. HOWEVER, IT WOULD NOT HAVE TO BE THE SECRETARY; IT COULD BE SOMEONE ELSE IN THE STATE DEPARTMENT OR THE USG; BUT GUATEMALA HAD TO HAVE SOME HELP. I SAID THAT THE US DID NOT WANT TO BE CAUGHT IN THE MIDDLE. HOWEVER, SPEAKING HYPOTHETICALLY, SUPPOSE WE EVER REACHED A POINT WHERE US MIGHT PLAY SOME ROLE. PRESIDENT MUST REALIZE THAT ANY EFFORT WE UNDERTOOK WOULD NOT NECESSARILY FAVOR GUATEMALA. HE SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THAT WE MUST BE COMPLETELY IMPARTIAL, BUT REPEATED HIS PLEA FOR SOME US HELP IN RESOLVING DISPUTE.

6. I THEN SAID I WAS UNDER INSTRUCTIONS TO MAKE CLEAR THAT USG IS STRONGLY AND FIRMLY OPPOSED TO THE USE OF FORCE IN THIS DISPUTE. PRESIDENT SAID HE WAS AS WELL. I SAID THAT NO RESOLUTION OF ANY KIND THAT MIGHT EMERGE FROM UNGA IS SUFFICIENT JUSTIFICATION FOR GUATEMALAN MILITARY ACTION. SHOULD FORCE BE USED, US COULD NOT BE EXPECTED TO TAKE A POSITION IN ANY INTERNATIONAL FORUM, SUCH AS OAS OR UN, THAT WOULD BE REGARDED AS IN ANY WAY ACCEPTING, APPROVING, OR REWARDING USE OF FORCE. I WANTED PRESIDENT TO UNDERSTAND THAT AND TO UNDERSTAND THAT I WAS SPEAKING ON INSTRUCTIONS. PRESIDENT LOOKED THUNDER-STROCK.

7. HE SAID THAT GOG HAD HAD CONTINGENCY PLANS FOR MILITARY ACTION IN BELIZE FOR 45 YEARS AND UPDATED THEM FROM TIME TO

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TIME. THAT WAS ALL THAT WAS TAKING PLACE AT PRESENT TIME. USAID THIS WAS A VERY DELICATE TIME TO BE UPDATING THEM AND HE REPLIED THAT IT WAS A VERY DELICATE SITUATION. HE ASKED ME TO ASSURE MY GOVERNMENT THAT HE TOO OPPOSED THE USE OF FORCE AND THAT GUATEMALA HAD NO PRESENT INTENTION TO USE FORCE. HE AGAIN APPEALED TO USG TO MEDIATE, TO USE ITS GOOD OFFICES, TO ENCOURAGE THE OTHER SIDE TO OFFER SOLUTIONS, TO DO WHATEVER WE CAN TO HELP GUATEMALA TO CONTINUE DIPLOMATIC DISCUSSIONS.

8. I THEN SAID I WANTED TO TALK ABOUT GUATEMALA'S REQUEST FOR C-47'S. WE ARE YOUR FRIENDS. WE WANT TO BE ABLE TO RESPOND AFFIRMATIVELY TO GUATEMALA'S REQUEST WHENEVER IT IS POSSIBLE TO DO SO. WHEN GUATEMALA FIRST ASKED FOR C-47'S I FULLY SUPPORTED ITS REQUEST. BUT WASHINGTON WAS CONCERNED ABOUT POSSIBILITY OF THEIR USE AGAINST BELIZE. PRESIDENT SAID HE UNDERSTOOD WE WERE CONCERNED ABOUT UPSETTING THE MILITARY BALANCE. I SAID CONCERN WAS OVER BELIZE, NOT ABOUT BALANCE IN CENTRAL AMERICA. WE DON'T WANT TO GIVE GOG NEGATIVE RESPONSE BUT AS LONG AS THERE IS DANGER THAT GUATEMALA MIGHT USE THESE AIRCRAFT AGAINST BELIZE GOG CANNOT EXPECT ANY ANSWER FROM US OTHER THAN THAT MATTER REMAINS UNDER STUDY. GUATEMALA'S OWN ACTIONS AND ATTITUDES DO NOT PERMIT US TO SAY YES. WE OF COURSE RECOGNIZE GUATEMALA'S RIGHT TO PURCHASE MILITARY EQUIPMENT ANYWHERE IT WISHED AND THAT IT COULD ACQUIRE AIRCRAFT AND ARMS ELSEWHERE. PRESIDENT SAID GUATEMALA DID NOT WANT TO BUY FROM ANY OTHER SOURCE, AND HE ASKED RATHER PLAINTIVELY WHETHER IF BELIZE NEGOTIATIONS GOT BACK ONTO THE TRACKS WE MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO RELEASE C-47'S. I REPLIED THAT WE COULD NOT AS LONG AS THERE WAS ANY DOUBT ABOUT GUATEMALA'S INTENTIONS. PRESIDENT LOOKED CRUSHED, BUT FINALLY SAID THAT HE RECOGNIZED BRITISH WERE OUR FRIENDS AND ALLIES TOO.

9. CONVERSATION ENDED AS CORDIALLY AS IT HAD BEGUN. ALTHOUGH MUCH OF WHAT I HAD TO SAY WAS OBVIOUSLY UNPLEASANT NEWS FOR THE PRESIDENT, I THINK IT SUCCEEDED IN REMOVING FROM HIS MIND SOME DANGEROUS MISCONCEPTIONS AND IN MAKING OUR POSITION CLEAR. I ALSO BELIEVE THAT WE HAVE MADE SOME PROGRESS IN GETTING HIS ASSURANCE THAT GUATEMALA WOULD ACCEPT A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING INDEPENDENCE FOR BELIZE, AS LONG AS IT ALSO REFERRED TO THE PRIOR NEED TO NEGOTIATE A SOLUTION OF THE DISPUTE WITH GUATEMALA.

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## Message Attributes

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**Capture Date:** 01 JAN 1994  
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**Concepts:** DISPUTE SETTLEMENT, FOREIGN POLICY POSITION  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 20 SEP 1975  
**Decaption Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Decaption Note:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
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**Disposition Authority:** ShawDG  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
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**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** BELIZE DISPUTE - MEETING WITH PRESIDENT LAUGERUD  
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**To:** STATE  
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